

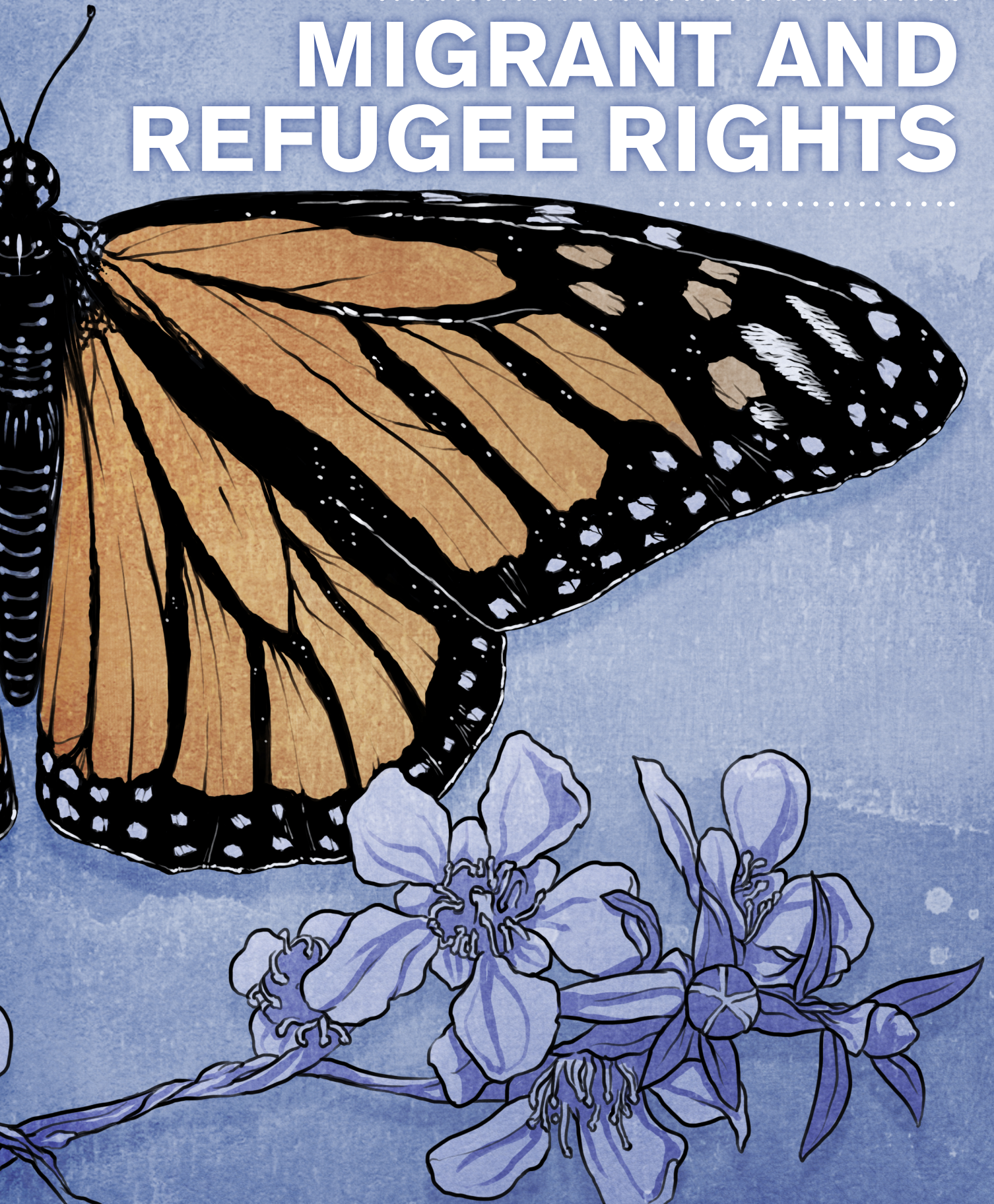
# Fightback

*Struggle, Solidarity, Socialism*

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## MIGRANT AND REFUGEE RIGHTS

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## **Editorial**

*Ani White is a Pākehā postgraduate student/tutor in Media Studies, a member of Fightback, and the coordinating editor of this issue.*

In the lead-up to Aotearoa/New Zealand's 2017 General Election, Fightback and others have co-launched the Migrant and Refugee Rights Campaign. In the context of rising international xenophobic populism, and the failure of NZ parliamentary 'Left' parties to take a consistent stand for migrants, we considered this an important political focus.

The following articles were initially solicited as a part of the campaign. However, as they came together, it became clear that this discussion must be broader and more multifaceted than the theme 'Migrant and Refugee Rights' captures; the struggle must be rooted in an understanding of colonisation.

Arama Rata's excellent article which opens the issue, on the problem of euphemistic discussion of racism, frames the fight against racism against the backdrop of Aotearoa's colonisation. Relatedly, The Guardian's David Wearing argues that British xenophobia is inseparable from the country's colonial past.



This broader post-colonial perspective must frame and inform the street movement for migrant/refugee rights, which the remaining pages focus on – with articles on Brexit, the German far-right, the meaning of the monarch butterfly symbol, and finally the fight against xenophobia in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

The issue concludes with the kaupapa statement of the Migrant and Refugee Rights Campaign. Contrary to dominant discourse which pits migrants/refugees against the 'white working class', we argue that what's best for migrant workers is best for everyone; universal cheap high-quality housing, Living Wages, the right to join unions alongside other workers.

You can find out more about this campaign at [marrc.org.nz](http://marrc.org.nz), or [Facebook.com/marrc.nz](https://www.facebook.com/marrc.nz).

As this magazine goes to print, we have heard the terrible news of the attack in Manchester. We stand in solidarity with everyone affected by the attack. Whatever your cause, killing civilians is never acceptable, let alone children. Let's stand firm against any backlash targeting innocent people who just happen to look a certain way.

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# About Fightback + Core Program

Fightback is a socialist media project with a magazine, a website, and other platforms. We believe that a structural analysis is vital in the task of winning a world of equality and plenty for all. White-supremacist capitalist patriarchy, our current socio-economic system, is not only exploiting people and planet – but is designed to operate this way. Therefore we advocate a total break with the current system to be replaced by one designed and run collectively based on principles of freedom, mutual aid, and social need.

We recognise that capitalism was imposed in Aotearoa / New Zealand through colonisation. While we draw substantially on European whakapapa and intellectual traditions, we seek to break the unity of the European colonial project, in favour of collective self-determination and partnership between tangata whenua and tau iwi. We recognise that this must be a learning process.

Fightback is a place to stand for those seeking to dismantle all oppression and exploitation. While we draw inspiration and lessons from history, theoretical agreement on past revolutions is not the basis for our unity. Rather, we unify around a common programme for transformation here and now.

As individuals we are involved in trade unions, feminist organising, anti-war action, and various forms of work. As a collective, Fightback develops propaganda that seeks to link this wider work with a socialist programme.

## 10-Point Program

**Fightback stands for the following core program, and for building institutions of grassroots power in the working class and oppressed groups to bring them about:**

- 1. Constitutional transformation** based on Tino Rangatiratanga, Mana Motuhake and workers power. Tangata whenua and community co-ops to operate as kaitiaki over public resources.
- 2. Secure, appropriate and meaningful work** for those who want it, with a shorter working week. The benefit system to be replaced with a Universal Basic Income.
- 3. International working class solidarity.** Open borders, full rights for migrant workers. Recognition of Pasefika rights to self-determination. Opposition to all imperialist intervention and alliances, including New Zealand state's participation in military occupations, 'free trade' agreements and surveillance agreements.
- 4. No revolution without women's liberation.** Full funding for appropriate, community- driven abuse prevention and survivor support, free access to all reproductive technologies, public responsibility for childcare and other reproductive work. The right to full, safe expression of sexuality and gender identity.
- 5. An ecosocialist solution** to climate change. End fossil fuel extraction, expand green technology and public transport, and radically restructure industrial food production.
- 6. Freedom of information.** End corporate copyright policies in favour of creative commons. Public support for all media technologies, expansion of affordable broadband internet to the



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whole country. An end to government spying.

**7. Abolish prisons**, replace with restorative justice and rehabilitation.

**8. Universal right to housing.** Expansion of high-density, high-quality public housing, strict price controls on privately owned houses. Targeted support to end involuntary homelessness.

**9. Fully-funded healthcare** at every level. Move towards health system based on informed consent, remove inequities in accident compensation, opposition to “top-down” efforts to change working people’s behaviour.

**10. Fully-funded education** at every level, run by staff and students. Funding for all forms of education and research, enshrining kaupapa Maori approaches.

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## **Watered-down biculturalism: How avoiding the ‘r-word’ undermines our liberation movement**

*Dr Arama Rata is a researcher at the National Institute of Demographic and Economic Analysis, and the Māori spokesperson for MARRC (Migrant and Refugee Rights Campaign).*

At an otherwise ordinary meeting, volunteering on committee addressing biculturalism, I had an awkward moment. Not one of those social media awkward moments that mildly embarrass, yet ultimately endear us to our online friends. No, this awkward moment was more akin to Paulo Freire’s ‘contradictions’: those experiences that force us to analyze and reinterpret our social realities.

Our meeting had been progressing productively, when a fellow volunteer, a Black woman, brought the meeting to a screeching halt. “What about racism?” she had asked. What. About. Racism? You see we had been marching through our agenda, offering solutions to problems faced by Māori within the organization, without one mention of the ‘r word’. After a short but pregnant pause, we acknowledged our colleague’s question and wrote ‘exposing racism’ on the whiteboard (we were in the midst of brainstorming) followed by ‘and structural inequalities’. In that awkward moment we had been forced to address racism, but after the briefest consideration we had reframed racism as ‘structural inequalities’, and carried on with our biculturalism meeting.

Don’t get me wrong, Māori are not shy to address racism; for many of us it is never far from the surface of our consciousness. But what had occurred in that meeting, I’ve come to realise, is common in ‘bicultural’ spaces, as Māori and Pākehā attempt to reach agreement

by speaking in euphemisms our colonisers are comfortable with. Limited though they may be, there are mechanisms in place to deal specifically with Treaty breaches, and many institutions have policies that offer vague commitments to uphold ‘Treaty principles’. And so we adopt the language of our colonisers to exploit policy provisions, and in so doing attempt to dismantle the master’s house using the master’s tools, one Treaty principle at a time. However, in doing so we water-down our liberation movement, and fail to address the root cause of our oppression.

There’s no shortage of examples of racism reframed so as not to offend the ‘mainstream’ white majority. Even our most racist institutions cannot tolerate the r word and tie themselves in linguistic knots to avoid the term. Take prisons. It is no secret that Māori are grossly overrepresented in the prison population. A 2007 report <sup>1</sup> from the Department of Corrections themselves identified prejudice resulting in harsher consequences for Māori within the criminal justice system. However, nowhere in their 60 page report do they describe the system as racist. In fact, they attempt to dissuade readers from concluding the system is racist, warning, “The figures lend themselves to extremist interpretations” describing, by way of example, those who would “accuse the criminal justice system of being brutally racist.” To avoid using the r word, the report opts instead for the term ‘bias’.



Ten years on, Corrections still show an aversion to the r word. To their credit, Corrections have implemented an education program to address the unfair treatment of Māori, but they continue avoid framing the prejudice as racism, employing the further diluted term 'unconscious bias'. Appearing on TV3's The Nation back in 2015 to discuss the program, Police Commissioner Mike Bush skirted the r word, stating, "our data... showed there was a disparity in the way we applied some of our discretion." But reassured viewers that, "like any good organization you have to recognize there can be some unconscious bias."

Corrections by no means monopolize the euphemism 'bias'. A recent report revealed teachers held low expectations of their Māori students, adding to a growing body of research showing that this type of racism is rife within the education system. However, the authors of the report opted to call a spade a flat, rectangular, sharp-edged digging implement, as they described the racism towards Māori as "negative cognitive bias in teachers' judgements."<sup>2</sup>

The terms 'cognitive bias' or 'unconscious bias' are not entirely without merit. It is useful to acknowledge that the processes driving racist decision making often occur without conscious awareness. And training programs that teach participants to acknowledge and mitigate the effects of unconscious bias can be helpful. But it is precisely because these processes are unconscious and ubiquitous that we must name racism, unpack it, dissect it, hold it to the light, and free ourselves from it.

Diluting the language of our liberation movement in favour of Treaty sector speak is also to our detriment as it enables the separation of

projects resisting colonialism from those resisting racism, despite the inextricable link between the two. There's a reason Māori are suspicious of the term 'multiculturalism', and people of colour are just as distrusting of the term 'biculturalism'. The terms are often used against us, by those in power, to deny our rights. Biculturalism, Māori are told, is an outdated cultural artifact. Multiculturalism, they assure us, better captures the contemporary ethnic diversity of the nation. Thus our concerns are relegated to the past, and our experiences as colonised peoples are overlooked. Yet, when arguing for the inclusiveness that the term multiculturalism suggests, people of colour are denied seats at tables where Māori are represented, and are told Māori rights derive from the Treaty of Waitangi, the founding document of this bicultural nation, thereby failing to acknowledge the cultural distinctiveness and racial oppression of people of colour.

Thus Māori and people of colour become casualties of divide and conquer tactics, as we plead our cases, compare our circumstances, and scrap for the meager resources made available to us. Yes, our experiences are different, and our positions as colonisers and the colonized put us in a power relationship with one another that should not be ignored. But Māori and people of colour can not allow ourselves to be baited by our oppressors into a fight for the title of 'most oppressed': a title none of us want to win anyway. Colonialism and racism are inextricably interconnected and any attempt to root-out one while allowing the other to thrive will ultimately result in our mutual failure.

How could the ideology racism take hold of us so tightly, permeate through every fibre of our social fabric, and operate through us, even without our awareness? In 1868, as tensions

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.corrections.govt.nz/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/672574/Over-representation-of-Maori-in-the-criminal-justice-system.pdf](http://www.corrections.govt.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/672574/Over-representation-of-Maori-in-the-criminal-justice-system.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Maori students could suffer from teacher bias: Treasury-commissioned paper. New Zealand Herald. Tuesday 18 April 2017. Nicholas Jones [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=11837899](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11837899)

bubbled furiously in the lead up to war in South Taranaki, Riwha Titokowaru's representative Toi Whakataka received Crown representative James Booth, at Te Ngutu o te Manu. Booth reprimanded Toi for the actions taken in response to creeping land confiscations, to which Toi

countered, "You are doing a great wrong to us. So great you do not see it." <sup>3</sup> While it would be easy to assume that Pākehā actions in South Taranaki were motivated by greed, renowned lawyer, activist, and academic Moana Jackson described the 'great wrong' of colonization as 'beyond motive'.

I never understood how colonization was 'beyond motive' until I had an epiphany watching my 2-year-old daughter at play. Lately she's been copying her father, trying to swat flies. Despite being new to the world and endowed with a gentle nature, she has already come to see flies as utterly dispensable, with no inherent value. She's learnt to swat them without knowing why. Her attitude towards flies has been formed. And with this attitude she doesn't need a motive to eradicate them.

Racism makes us see some human beings as inferior, as less than, as non-human. Colonialism, based on racism – on an ideology that dehumanizes – needs no motive, no justification, as the colonist cannot see that what they do is wrong; They are just going about their day, swatting flies along the way, doing wrong that is so great precisely because they do not see it.

One Pākehā official unafraid of the r word was Andrew Judd. While serving as Mayor of New Plymouth, Judd described himself as a 'recovering racist'. It seems his words were intolerable to some mainstream media outlets; Rather

than redefining the term racism, these outlets re-characterised Judd as a 'reformed racist' <sup>4</sup> or as 'once racist' <sup>5</sup>, conveniently tucking racism away in the past. But in borrowing Alcoholics Anonymous terminology Judd probably knew that just like addiction, recovering from racism would not be a quick fix but a life long journey of commitment. To extend the AA metaphor further, the first step to recovery is admitting we have a problem. And how are we to eliminate racism from our society if we can't even say the word?

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<sup>3</sup> Belich, James. (2010). *I Shall Not Die: Titokowaru's War, 1868-1869*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, p.53.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/one-news/new-zealand/reformed-racist-andrew-judd-options-fulfil-maori-representation-date>

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=11637995](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11637995)



# **Immigration will remain a toxic issue until Britain faces up to its colonial past**



*By David Wearing. Reprinted from The Guardian.*

Both Ukip and Theresa May trumpeted their anti-immigrant credentials yesterday, with fresh and not-so-fresh policies for the election. Hostility to foreigners is now an established theme in the UK's political discourse, partly because it has deep cultural roots. But there may be something we can learn from Emmanuel Macron about how this problem can be addressed.

Marine Le Pen's defeat in the presidential election was a moment for relief, but hardly celebration. It remains the case that one in three votes was cast for an apologist for France's role in the Holocaust, and there is no reason to imagine an overly sharp distinction with the other two thirds. No one who voted for Macron in the second round after supporting the brazenly Islamophobic François Fillon in the first, for example, could possibly be described as an anti-racist. And if Macron strengthens big business at the expense of the working and middle class, then the forms of alienation that help to fuel the far right are certain to increase.

There is, however, one reason for optimism about the Macron presidency: his honesty about France's imperial past. The chauvinistic nature of French patriotism, and the pervasiveness of Islamophobia in particular, cannot be fully explained without reference to the resentment caused by defeat in the Algerian war of

independence, and by the mythology of French colonialism more broadly. When Macron accurately described French rule in Algeria as "barbaric" and "a crime against humanity", he was directly challenging a nationalistic narrative that has long poisoned French politics and nourished the Front National. It is an admission of which British politicians should take heed.

The less sophisticated forms of Marxism and liberalism have always had a bad habit of reading the politics of a situation straight off the economics. But while economic hardship can have a role in boosting the hard right, this won't do as an explanation by itself. Why does being "left behind by globalisation" (or "screwed by neoliberalism", if you prefer plainer speaking) not lead working-class people of colour to vote Ukip? Why did the Trump and Brexit votes comprise a majority of middle-class or wealthier people, either attracted to or not put off by the hateful demagoguery of the campaigns?

Sooner or later, one has to engage with the ideological factors at work, and this is where our understanding of national history comes in. A nation's collective sense of self is bound to play a part in its politics, and a collective sense of self that evolves through centuries of imperialism, and the inescapable role of racism within that, is bound to develop a particular character.

In the French case, it is impossible to maintain a settler colonial regime on your own doorstep for over 100 years, with all the brutality inherent to such a project, without telling yourself certain stories by way of justification. If you can convince yourself that you are the agent of modernity and progress, while your colonial subjects are backward, superstitious and irrationally violent, then massacres, torture and repression become regrettable necessities or understandable aberrations. Then, when your subjects in north Africa and elsewhere overthrow your rule, end your empire, and then in some cases come to your country as economic migrants or refugees, you are ready to see these developments as a humiliation, an insult and a threat.

The chauvinistic myth of the righteous empire is alive and well on both sides of the channel. The thousands of Kenyans arbitrarily rounded up and subjected to nightmarish abuses in British detention camps in the 1950s might take issue with foreign secretary Boris Johnson's view that "the problem is not that we were once in charge [in Africa], but that we are not in charge any more". Fillon described Macron's "dislike of our history" as "unworthy of a candidate for the presidency", while Gordon Brown proclaimed that "the days of Britain having to apologise for its colonial history are over". Much Tory Euroscepticism is grounded in nostalgia for a fairyland version of empire, airbrushed of its systemic violence and exploitation, and now to be somehow revived as a post-Brexit trading network. In spite of its bloody record, 43% of Britons believe the British empire was a good thing.

The British left is often scolded, including by its own members, for failing to embrace patriotism. But patriotism in a country whose sense of itself and others was forged through centuries of empire is not a politically neutral thing, equally available to left or right. The reality is that in Britain and France much of our patriotism has been toxified by imperial self-satisfaction, an inherited sense of superiority over others, and a refusal to climb down from this through an honest reappraisal of our history. It is here that we find the roots of the post-imperial

status anxiety that characterises the rightwing Brexiteers. It is also here that we find the instinct to see Muslims as uncivilised, immigrants as an economic burden, and refugees as "cock-roaches" or just chancers on the scrounge.

What Britain needs instead is a collective sense of self that is open and pluralistic, with more room for humility and kindness. We need to be honest about British history not to feel guilty about crimes committed by other people before we were born, but to drain our sense of nationhood – and our relationships with others – of the toxins passed down from the days of empire. Above all, we need to dismantle the hard boundaries between "us" and "them" if a progressive politics, or just a politics of basic decency, is ever to be revived.





# **Brexit, Democracy and Oppression**

*By Neil Faulkner, author of Creeping Fascism: Brexit, Trump, and the Rise of the Far Right. Reprinted from Left Unity (UK).*

The penny dropped during a conversation with a Rumanian taxi-driver in Colchester. He reported his own and his community's experience of a marked change in the popular mood since the EU Referendum – an unmistakable undercurrent of suspicion, obstruction, and hostility.

It was not just a 'spike' last summer. There has been a permanent shift, underpinned by relentless anti-migrant messaging from the political elite and their media echo-chambers since the Brexit vote, giving confidence and licence to every closet racist who wants to spit at an East European.

The conversation suddenly brought to mind what Lenin once said about a socialist being 'the tribune of the oppressed'.

Lenin, by the way, is having a bad year. As the revisionist fake-history industry puts the truth about the Russian Revolution into the mincing machine, Lenin is being blamed for everything from Stalin to Trump. (I kid you not: take a look at Simon Sebag Montefiore's article in the Evening Standard on 13 January, headed 'Today's new world order has its roots in the events of 1917'.)

He is also being heralded by sections of the Left as the inventor of something called 'democratic centralism' – a charge guaranteed to kill any possibility of decent young activists on

anti-Trump demos ever wanting to read anything he ever wrote. A bit like offering someone an ice-cream laced with splintered glass.

Lenin was the champion of mass participatory democracy. He was also the champion of unflinching socialist principle – and that meant standing foursquare, in all circumstances, even in the face of a hostile reactionary mass, on the side of the most oppressed.

This is both a moral and a practical matter. Every socialist must be prepared to side with the most oppressed, the most vilified, the most isolated of the victims of the system. Any socialist who buckles and makes concessions – to racism, to sexism, to homophobia, to whatever – not only betrays a section of the working class under attack, but also feeds the division of the class and undermines its ability to fight.

Both the Lexit Left and the Corbynista Left are arguing that socialists should 'respect' the Brexit vote. This argument is false. It is a betrayal of every migrant worker whose status has been threatened by the vote. And it is a massive concession to the racist discourse for which Brexit is now the primary framework.

Part of the hopeless theoretical muddle is the conflating of liberal parliamen-

tary representative democracy with socialist participatory democracy.

The former is atomised, passive, manipulative, and disempowering. The latter is collective, active, democratic, and involves the masses organising to take control of their own lives. Referendums are particularly dubious. There is a long history of referendums being used by authoritarian regimes to enhance their legitimacy.

Who is setting the agenda? Who is formulating the question? Who is supplying the information (or misinformation)? Whose interests are being served? To ask these questions is to underline the critical difference between their democracy and ours – the democracy of parliamentary (mis)representation and the democracy of mass assemblies.

Brexit is being implemented by a hard-right Tory regime that offers permanent austerity, decaying public services, grotesque greed at the top, and mounting poverty and despair at the base. And the clinch-point – in relation to Brexit – is immigration control. May is peddling hard racism as cover for hard austerity.

The EU offers four freedoms of movement – of investment, goods, services, and people. The first three need not concern us because investment, goods, and services are controlled by capital, not us. The key issue at stake for working people is the right of free movement.

That right is not extended to refugees and migrants from outside Europe. The EU is itself a racist ‘fortress’ that exists in violation of the right of free movement. But that is irrelevant to the question raised by Brexit – which is the right of those inside the EU to move freely across the continent. If we cannot defend that right, what hope have we of erasing other borders, of breaking down the barriers to movement that deny access to people from the wider world?

The issue is clear. We are internationalists opposed to borders, border fences, and border police.

We say: All migrants are welcome here. We

say, with Marx, that the workers have no country.

We reject the nationalism, racism, and oppression inherent in the Brexit vote. We reject the argument that says migrants are to blame: we blame the rich, the corporations, and the system.

We deny that anyone has the right to vote away the rights of others. We stand with the oppressed against Brexit and everything it represents – abuse, racial violence, insecurity, the threat of deportation, a green light to police attacks.

We do not ‘respect’ the vote: we denounce it and we shout our denunciation from the rooftops.



# **The “Alternative for Germany” : A chronicle of the rise of a far-right party**

*By JoJo, a Fightback correspondent and subscriber based in Germany.*

**22 April 2017:** I am sitting at an intersection somewhere in Cologne, together with other antifascists. It is cold, wet and we had to get up early, but people are happy as news has reached us that other roads are blocked as well, and members of the “Alternative for Germany” (AfD) are having a hard time reaching their party conference. Nevertheless, it is quite likely that the AfD will enter federal parliament after the elections this September. It will be the first time a party to the right of the Christian-Democratic party (CDU) and the liberal party (FDP) will enter federal parliament since the 50s. So how did we get here?

**2013:** The AfD is founded. From its beginning, it gets a lot of media attention that helps it to gain support. Their focus is on financial policy: the AfD criticizes the government’s reaction to the Euro-crisis (supporting Greece with money, but only in turn for brutally enforced austerity). However, the AfD does not criticize this from a standpoint of solidarity with the Greek working class (as the leftist Blockupy network did), but from the standpoint of the German middle- to upper-class tax payer who does not want their tax money being spent on the Greeks. This program is also reflected in the party’s personnel: Its leader and founder is Bernd Lucke, a professor of economics.

The AfD has already developed a program on immigration, demanding stricter rules, but this

is not yet the main focus. In the federal election this year, the AfD gets 4.7%, but because of the 5% threshold does not enter parliament.

**May 2014:** The AfD enters the European Parliament with 7.1%. During the year, they also enter several regional parliaments in Germany.

**October 2014:** In Dresden (a town in what used to be the GDR or East Germany), 350 people rally under the slogan “Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident” (Pegida). They continue demonstrating every Monday, like the opposition in the GDR from whom they also take the slogan “we are the people”. Their numbers will grow to over 10,000 in December. Though they are not formally connected to the AfD, these are also people who would self-identify as ordinary citizens and not as Nazis, but who nevertheless promote a racist agenda. If the AfD is the parliamentary wing of the shift-to-the-right in Germany over the last few years, Pegida is the extra-parliamentary wing. However, they present themselves as a bit too radical for large parts of the AfD, so the party has no clear position on Pegida and will continue to argue about this issue during the coming years.

**4 July 2015:** At a conference, the party votes for Frauke Petry as the new leader, replacing Bernd Lucke. Lucke leaves the party and founds another one, which will not be as successful as







AfD. This split marks a shift in how the party presents itself: While Lucke wanted to have a serious, bourgeois party and his focus was mainly on currency-politics, Petry represents the new AfD, which is far more populist and more openly xenophobic, racist and anti-feminist. With this shift, the party's electorate also changes: While they still have cross-class support, more and more working-class voters vote for the AfD. Their support also grows in the former East Germany.

**August 2015:** Thousands of migrants, many of whom have fled the civil war in Syria, come to Germany over the Balkan route. Crowds of people welcome the migrants at the train stations and many organize in networks of refugee support, filling a gap left by the state. This shows that there is still a big portion of people that do not see migrants as potential enemies – is this a basis for a successful struggle against the AfD?

**29 September 2015:** The federal government reacts to the summer of migration (which is also called the “refugee crisis” in mainstream discourse) and to far-right mobilisations with the “asylum package I” - speeding up the asylum process, declaring more countries “safe” (so people can be deported to them) and stopping the announcement of deportations (now refugees will be arrested and deported without any prior notice). In 2016, package II follows. Just like in the 90s, the centrist parties (now including the Greens) react to the far-right by adopting its policies.

**New Year's Eve 2015/2016:** In Cologne, groups of young men sexually harass women in the main train station. Many are of North-African or Arab nationalities, which will in the following weeks and months be used in racist discourse to portray North-African and Arab men as sexual predators. The far-right including the AfD, that is otherwise strictly anti-feminist, discovers women's rights for their agenda – these rights can now be defended against migrants. Feminist and leftist groups will answer with a demonstration on International Women's Day under the motto “our feminism is anti-racist”.

**31 January 2016:** The communist alliance “Ums Ganze” (“everything is at stake”) has called

for a nation-wide meeting of anti-racists and antifascists in Frankfurt. Activists discuss what to do in this situation – so far, many antifascists have felt rather paralysed by the rise of the AfD which they could not prevent. After the meeting, UG launches the campaign “Nationalismus ist keine Alternative” (NIKA, “Nationalism is no alternative”). NIKA is an open campaign and a label that groups can take up to relate to each other. NIKA instigates a lot of small creative actions that do not need many activists but are good for publishing on social media. The hope that those who showed solidarity for migrants in summer 2015 could be mobilised to join the struggle against the AfD and against asylum packages I and II will only partially be fulfilled. But at least there is now an effective campaign that organizes antifascists and anti-racists.

The AfD's election campaigns this year are interrupted by these actions and others, but that does not prevent the party entering several more regional governments and reaching results far over 10%. The party's rhetoric radicalises further, e.g. AfD politician Beatrix von Storch suggests shooting refugees to prevent them crossing the border. In the Saarland region, the AfD cooperates with the neo-Nazi NPD; an attempt to kick out this regional branch fails.

**3 September 2016:** In Berlin, a nation-wide demonstration against the AfD takes place, organised by the alliance “Stand Up Against Racism”, but the participant numbers are below expectations. The intention of “Stand Up Against Racism” was to form a broad alliance including trade unions, the Social Democrats (SPD) and the Greens. However, the inclusion of these organisations does not lead to a bigger mobilisation. It remains mainly the job of the radical left to challenge the AfD.

**New Year's Eve 2016/2017:** As a reaction to last year's New Year's Eve, the police in Cologne now use racial profiling to prevent every North-African- /Arab-looking man who is single or with a group of other men from entering the square in front of the main station. Once again, the state adopts far-right policies.

**17 January 2017:** Björn Höcke, a far-right poli-



tician of the AfD in former East Germany, holds a speech in front of the party's youth organisation. He demands a "180 degree change" in the politics of commemoration concerning the Holocaust. He says: "We Germans are the only people in the world who have planted a memorial of shame in the heart of their capital". He is criticised for this blatant anti-Semitism by members of his own party and the leadership tries to expel him. This debate is part of a bigger clash between factions within the party. After Frauke Petry took over from Lucke who was too moderate for her in 2015, now her faction fears that ultra-radical politicians like Höcke could endanger the party's image.

On 22 April, we at least succeeded in delaying the AfD conference for more than an hour. After the blockades, there are several big demonstrations in the city. As Cologne likes to present itself as an open city, it is easily possible to mobilise big parts of civil society here, including the Carnival committees. This day was a success for us, but the AfD seems to carry on despite their inner disputes. The leading duo for the federal elections will consist on the one hand of Alexander Gauland, who supports Björn Höcke and has similar positions, and on the other hand of Alice Weider, who was in favour of Höcke's expulsion but said she would support his election campaign if he stays in the party. So the different factions seem to get along with each other. The prospect of ending the election success of the AfD in a short term is thus unlikely. While it is important to interrupt their election campaigns, the radical left needs long term strategies on how to go onto the offensive, push forward its own leftist politics and get rid of the basic problems in society that make the success of far-right populism possible.



## **What do butterflies have to do with open borders? Migration is beautiful**

*Reprinted from OpenBorders.Info.*

*By John Lee, an administrator of the Open Borders website.*

A friend recently drew my attention to Migration is Beautiful, an artistic project aimed at promoting the reform of US immigration laws. When I mentioned this to some other Open Borders bloggers, the first reaction was along the lines of “This is amazing, they don’t say anything about tougher border enforcement!” — sadly, the quality of immigration discourse is that even liberals feel compelled to sing odes to prison walls.

More than this, I especially like Migration is Beautiful for its explicit acknowledgement that any reform of US immigration policy must go beyond simply issuing more visas for high-skilled workers or regularising the immigration status of unauthorised immigrants. Its authors explicitly call out the arbitrary absurdity of an immigration policy which purports to be open, and yet makes people wait in an arbitrary queue for decades.

Moreover, Migration is Beautiful has done something incredibly important: it has given the liberal immigration movement a clear symbol and logo(right).

I think the butterfly can be suitably adapted to serve and symbolise the open borders movement more generally. As the artist behind this, Favianna Rodriguez says:

“The butterfly symbol was not my idea. Immigrant rights activists have seen the

butterfly as a symbol of fluid and peaceful migration for generations. To me, the monarch butterfly represents the dignity and resilience of migrants, and the right that all living beings have to move freely. I believe that we shouldn’t allow our identity to be defined only by our suffering, nor by the actions that others have taken to devalue our families and our labor — rather, let us celebrate our beauty, pride, and resilience in the face of inequality and injustice.”

The right of all human beings to move freely is one not commonly acknowledged, even on the left. If nothing else, surely this makes the Migration is Beautiful project remarkable.



## **Migrants are welcome –** **leftist xenophobia is not**

*By Daphne Lawless, a a Fightback/MARRC member living in Auckland with her wife and daughter. For more, see [daphnelawless.com](http://daphnelawless.com).*

When I was a young Alliance activist in Wellington in the 1990s, I know Frank Macskasy well as a staunch colleague in the fight against the neoliberal assault on workers. It's very sad to see him now promoting the xenophobic agenda of Martyn Bradbury's *The Daily Blog*, known as the "Breitbart of the NZ Left".

*TDB* is part of the current which I've called the "conservative left" – those activists who have taken a "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" attitude to the rise of Right-wing populism worldwide, including the Brexit movement in Britain and the Trump movement in the US. I've argued that many activists, having spent so long fighting neoliberal globalization, have ended up in a position where they think that anything neoliberals want must be bad. Most unfortunately – in the NZ context – this has turned into a belief that since neoliberals want more immigration, the Left should want less.

Frank's *TDB* post harps on the idea that the National government is encouraging immigration as an easy way to "artificially stimulate the economy" (an argument heard recently out of the mouth of New Zealand's master of xenophobic politics, Winston Peters). The first obvious question should be: if it were that simple to grow the economy, *what would be wrong with it?* What is wrong *in principle* to allow anyone willing to come here, work hard and be part of our community to do so? In particular,

no Pākehā New Zealander should have the bald-faced cheek to suggest that migration to this country should be treated with suspicion.

Frank skates over the contradiction between the idea that immigration "stimulates the economy" and the idea that it's problematic "at a time when unemployment was still high." A stimulated economy means more work available... right? Leaving aside this little problem, Frank goes on:

"The downside to high immigration has been to put strain on critical services such as roading and housing, and reduce demand for locally trained workers to fill vacancies. There is a downward pressure on wages, as cheaper immigrant-labour is brought into the workforce."

Both Frank's links go to NZ Herald articles. The first is a column concerning the last Budget, which contains the comment:

"The rise in net migration, on top of natural increases, is putting pressure on the health system, schools, housing and transport."

I've underlined the bit that Frank seems to have missed out. The issue is that *population growth* is putting pressure on our infrastructure. In Auckland in particular – despite the scare stories from the xenophobic Left and Right – "natural increase"

(that is, people having babies and not dying) is significantly greater contribution to population growth than migration. (Source: <http://transport-blog.co.nz/2015/11/25/why-is-auckland-growing/>) So where is Frank's worry about that section of population growth? Why is he not calling for a Chinese-style one-child policy, if the issue is really just about "more people" – rather than the murkier issue of "more people *not born here*"?

Frank's second link goes to a report on advice given by Treasury – not generally considered a reliable source of good economic advice by Leftists (except when it confirms their prejudices?) There is of course a real problem with cheap migrant labour. But it's nothing to do with "New Zealanders being priced out of low-waged jobs". Firstly, just like it's always been in this country, migrants tend to do the low-status jobs that New Zealanders don't want to do – fast food workers or security guards, who might be qualified professionals in their own country, can tell you about that. Secondly, the reason migrant labour is cheap is because of employers *cheating the system*. We're talking about migrants having their passports confiscated, and forced either into virtual slave labour, or work of a kind they never wanted to do.

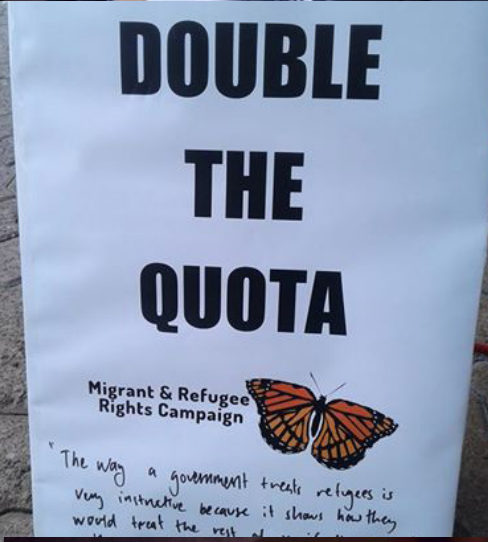
These are real problems. But they are not problems caused by migration. It is caused by migrant workers not getting a fair shake on the basis as all other workers in this country. Get rid of the incentive for human trafficking provided by the current immigration scheme – by giving all those who want to work here the legal right to do so, cracking down on unfair labour practices, and encouraging migrant workers to join unions and fight alongside all other workers for their rights.

Frank and his colleagues at *TDB* are irresponsibly stoking the forces of racism and xenophobia in this country. Some may be doing so out of nostalgia for a simpler, less culturally diverse New Zealand of the pre-neoliberal era. Some may be doing so out of cynical calculation that migrant-bashing is a way to defeat the hated National government. But it's a slowly growing sickness on the Left in New Zealand. The Migrant and Refugee Rights Coalition has been set up by socialists, unionists and

migrant communities who want to stand up and say unashamedly that we are *pro-immigration*, and pro-worker, and we can't allow the conservative left to speak for the rest of us.







May Day Rally for Migrant and Refugee Rights  
(photos by Aaron O'Neill)



*Photograph by Alicia Tolley*

## **Interview: Why Gayaal is standing for Wellington Central**

*Gayaal Iddamalgoda is a Legal Organiser for FIRST Union, and Wellington Central candidate for the Migrant and Refugee Rights Campaign (Aotearoa/NZ). We interview him on why he's standing for Wellington Central.*

### **Why do you support migrant/refugee rights?**

Because I believe that what is good for refugee and migrants is good for all workers in Aotearoa. Blaming migrants and refugees for the social and economic problems is a total farce. It protects the wealthy and powerful and deflects blame from the real problem which is a system of growing inequality which puts workers of all nationalities and backgrounds at the bottom of the heap. Migrant and refugee workers are at the bottom of the heap, they are workers like everyone else but bosses use their isolation from the rest of the working class to drive down rights and conditions for all workers. We need

to unite with migrants and refugees in order to make sure that all workers get the same rights and dignity. We need workers' struggle to ensure that all workers have rights and dignity. I support refugee rights for similar reasons, wars caused by greedy imperialists disproportionately affect working people but while the rich are able to travel freely with their money wherever they please, ordinary working people's movements are not free! Refugee rights is about freedom of movement and the basic right of all people to seek refuge from war and destruction wherever they chose.



### **How does your whakapapa inform your political perspective?**

My family were Sri Lankan migrants. While they were lucky enough not to come here as part of any refugee quota, they did flee war and political strife. Growing up in New Zealand I saw first hand through my parents the deep psychological scars that come with dislocation and war. It gave me a deep sense of human rights and social justice. Migrants like my family are not only hard working, they also have a deep sense of resilience and a strong will to resist injustice. I really do feel that these experiences have been passed down to me and I am grateful for it.

### **How does your experience as a trade unionist inform your understanding of migrant/refugee rights?**

As a trade unionist, I have the honour of being a part of the closest thing we have to a democratic movement. While the trade unions have a long way to go in living up to this potential, I firmly believe in the principle of workers organising together and fighting for political, social and economic power in a system that promotes the interests of a wealthy and greedy elite. I see the power of workers organizing together and, I see that the interests of working people are aligned, despite any differences of race, gender, sexuality etc. I have also had first hand insight into the oppression of migrant workers [many of whom have refugee backgrounds] and have become dismayed by the inability of these workers to access even the most basic protections as workers. Everything seems slated against them, from social prejudice and racism to unfair visa restrictions that tie them to their employers in ways that New Zealand workers are not. Migrant and refugee workers bring a net benefit to the economy and produce wealth and jobs, yet they are scapegoated by their fellow workers and kept down by racist employment and immigration policies.

### **What do you think of Andrew Little's recent call to cut immigration by 'tens of thousands'?**

I think it's appalling coming from a party that claims to represent the interests of ordinary New

Zealanders. Instead of pointing the finger at bosses and corporates who increase their wealth and power at the expense of these 'ordinary people', Andrew Little prefers to play into unfounded xenophobic scapegoating. It is sad that the so called Labour party cannot find the guts to stand up for Labour, which includes the thousands of migrants working in New Zealand in near slave like conditions. It is also completely callous that Andrew Little makes this posturing in a time when we face one of the greatest refugee crises of the human history. Andrew Little's posturing is also really absurd in light of the actual flow of immigrants into the country. It is an unsubstantial comment which seeks to sensationalise beyond any reason the real nature of immigration and make immigrants look like a dark and sinister force. It reminds me of old racist paranoia from the 19th century . It astonishes me that we have not really moved past that.

### **What do you hope to achieve by standing?**

I hope to draw people into debates about refugee and migrant rights. I hope to challenge the causal xenophobia expose the racist myths that lie under them. I hope to start a conversation among workers, their organisations and their unions about the importance of migrant and refugee rights and I want to make the point: 'What's good for migrants/refugees is good for everyone'.

# **Myths about Migrants and Refugees**

## **Myth #1: Migrants and refugees are a drain on the economy.**

Migrants are a net economic benefit to the economy both in terms of GDP and taxes paid.

## **Myth #2: Migrants drive up house prices/ drive New Zealanders out of their homes.**

The housing boom is driven both by profiteering, and population growth. However, the bulk of Auckland's population growth is 'natural increase', i.e. people giving birth. Increasing house prices benefit landlords, speculators and other profiteers – whether locally or internationally based. There is no reason that housing infrastructure must be a zero-sum game. MARRC calls for a universal right to high-quality, low-rent, sustainable urban housing.



## **Myth #3: Migrants drive down wages, and must therefore be kept out.**

Firstly, just like it's always been in this country, migrants tend to do the low-status jobs that New Zealanders don't want to do – fast food workers or security guards, who might be qualified professionals in their own country, can tell you about that. Secondly, the reason migrant labour is cheap is because of employers cheating the system. We're talking about migrants having their passports confiscated, and forced either into virtual slave labour, or work of a kind they never wanted

to do. These are real problems. But they are not problems caused by migration. It is caused by migrant workers not getting a fair shake on the basis as all other workers in this country. Get rid of the incentive for human trafficking provided by the current immigration scheme – by giving all those who want to work here the legal right to do so, cracking down on unfair labour practices, and encouraging migrant workers to join unions and fight alongside all other workers for their rights.

## **Myth #4: Refugees are a potential terror threat.**

Refugees from war-torn areas of the world are fleeing from terror, whether state-sponsored or otherwise. In Europe and the USA, terror attacks are largely carried out by citizens or passport-holders. Far-right white supremacists account for a large amount of terror attacks. Even attacks by Islamists are not carried out by refugees: to

give a prominent example, the people who carried out the 9/11 attacks were not refugees. Furthermore, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, neither Islamists nor refugees have ever carried out terror attacks.



## **Migrant and Refugee Rights** **Campaign: Kaupapa and Demands**

We are tauiwi and tangata whenua.  
We are migrants, refugees and citizens.  
We live in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Contemporary migrants and refugees do not come to New Zealand in the same spirit as the Pākehā settlers who colonised Aotearoa in the 19th Century. The Pākehā colonial structure remains in place, and oppresses migrants and refugees, along with Māori.

We express horror at the election of Donald Trump as President of the USA, and Brexit, in the UK, each riding a wave of xenophobia. We recognise that the extreme xenophobia emergent in the USA and the UK can develop here, and therefore aim to challenge any xenophobia propagated by political parties.

We oppose all attempts to blame migrant workers for economic problems. Migrant workers are a net economic benefit to Aotearoa/New Zealand both in terms of GDP and taxes paid. While employers take advantage of migrants to drive down conditions, we demand full rights for migrant workers. While politicians attempt to blame migrants for the housing crisis, we demand that the universal right to housing come before the profitability of housing.

The New Zealand government's refugee quota

has remained stagnant since the 1980s. We rank 78 th in the world in terms of refugees per capita. Although the government is complicit in war crimes in the Middle East and North Africa, producing recent waves of displacement, in 2013 the New Zealand government took just 16% of it refugees from the Middle East and 3% from Africa. The New Zealand government is indebted to those displaced by its policies.

Climate change will increasingly affect low-lying atolls in the Pacific, nations which have a minimal carbon footprint. This has already begun with Tuvalu. The New Zealand government owes a climate debt, and accepting climate refugees is part of that obligation, alongside addressing the causes of climate change itself to avoid forced displacement.

We envision a socially just Aotearoa/ New Zealand. While focusing specifically on migrant and refugee rights, we also stand in solidarity with all workers, indigenous people, religious and ethnic minorities, disabled people, queer/trans and takatāpui communities.

We understand that blaming migrant workers and refugees is a divide-and-rule tactic. We refuse to be divided. We demand that the government grant full rights for migrant workers, and double the refugee quota.

# Migrant & Refugee Rights Campaign



## We demand:

- Full rights for migrant workers, double the refugee quota.
  - Increase funding for resettlement support organisations.
  - Open borders to the Pacific.
  - Right of migrant workers to unionise.
  - Right of all migrants to public services and benefits.
  - Regional Seasonal Employer scheme revised to grant full rights to all workers.
  - Abolish restrictions on work and student visas.
  - Increase funding for labour inspections of migrant workers' conditions, including coastal shipping and other worksites.
  - Universal right to high-quality, low-rent, sustainable urban housing.
  - A living wage for all workers, regardless of origin.
  - Ability of existing residents to sponsor refugees and migrants, including family members.
  - Recognise all legitimate international qualifications.
  - Fully fund appropriate support services for migrant women, including family violence intervention.
  - Recognise status of climate refugees, call for climate refugees to be internationally recognised.
  - Pressure Australian government to drop Mandatory Detention policy.
- If you would like to hear more, please follow us online, or get in touch:
- [Marrc.org.nz](http://Marrc.org.nz)
  - [Facebook/marrc.nz](https://www.facebook.com/marrc.nz)
  - [Twitter.com/marrc\\_aotearoa](https://twitter.com/marrc_aotearoa)
  - Email: [marrc.aotearoa@gmail.com](mailto:marrc.aotearoa@gmail.com)



